

Weekly Market Bulletin

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John H. Lynch
Governor

Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food
Lorraine S. Merrill
Commissioner

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From Your Commissioner...

Gates Foundation Commits \$73 Million to Agriculture

Self-professed “city boy” Bill Gates says he’s getting a kick out of learning about agriculture and how advancing farm productivity can improve people’s lives in impoverished regions. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is making agriculture a major focus of its efforts to improve health and well-being around the world. With a long-term goal of tripling the income of 150 million small farmers by 2025, the Gates Foundation has committed \$73 million over the next five years. In a video message on the www.gatesfoundation.org website, the Microsoft founder speaks of his admiration for the Green Revolution, and of his intent to bring similar assistance in science, technology, education, etc., to farmers in Africa, focusing on African crops and growing conditions. Farmers in India and other south Asian areas will also get assistance with low-cost irrigation techniques and development of higher-yielding crops.

The Gates Foundation will take a collaborative and comprehensive approach to tackling these stubborn and complex challenges. Women will be front and center in the Gates agricultural initiatives. Women do up to 80% of the farming in developing countries, yet typically receive no more than 5% of extension services—and have little representation in training, research or policy positions. “Women are essential to the success of agriculture in the developing world,” explains the foundation’s website. “Therefore, we’ve developed a strategy to address the needs of women farmers at every step of the way—through increased participation, opportunity, and training. We’re providing research fellowships to 360 African women scientists to ensure that the next generation of agricultural researchers includes women.”

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Our state is fortunate to have educational programs like FFA and UNH’s CREAM, where young men and women are getting hands-on exposure to agricultural science and business, and developing leadership abilities. About 250 enthusiastic FFA members recently gathered for the Granite State FFA Association annual convention in Bartlett. Farmers and other agricultural leaders who volunteered to help judge the numerous competitions came away with renewed admiration for these accomplished young people. In remarks to the general session, State FFA Treasurer Tianna VanderWoude of Loudon adapted a riff from Seinfeld, paying homage to the FFA blue jacket, “This jacket has changed my life. When I put this jacket on, I am composed, secure—I can rise to any social occasion.”

State FFA Vice President Colton McCarthy of Tilton demonstrated that composure when he gave his address—a personal and compelling story of the importance of believing in one’s self, and of what he has gained from FFA. Abused as a child and teen, told repeatedly by the people he loved that he would “never amount to anything,” Colton said he finally realized he needed to believe in himself and make his own way. He got involved in agriculture at school, and FFA helped him reach out to others and try new things. He never imagined he would be elected to state office, speaking in front of large groups of people. He told me afterward that he is grateful to his advisor at Winnisquam Regional High

School, Janet Rosequist, for pushing him to do things like public speaking, and for helping him find his future career. Colton plans to earn his associate's degree in landscaping at NH Technical Institute. His dream is to become a high school ag teacher and help inspire others.

UNH's twelfth CREAM class held their banquet last week, inviting their families to enjoy the recap of their year managing the 26-cow teaching herd of registered Holsteins. The largest class yet—24 women and 4 men—by all accounts worked and learned well together. This class also faced the biggest financial challenge ever, due to 1970s-style milk prices. Next year's class will be even bigger, and had to be capped at 34 students.

Lorraine Merrill, Commissioner